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ABSTRACT

This paper presents information regarding two university field programs in two elementary schools in New Orleans (Louisiana), serving culturally diverse children, and it attempts to reveal the influences of each school context on preservice teachers' acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge, their concerns and dilemmas, and their frames of reference about teaching children in a nonmainstream school setting. Study participants were 85 female and 3 male preservice teachers majoring in elementary or exceptional education. The study was designed along the lines of participant-observational field work deriving its data from field notes of teaching observations as well as texts such as dialogue journals. Major themes emerging from the inquiry dealt with the differences between the two schools; and preservice teachers' unrealistic expectations, anxiety, negative frames of reference, feelings of failure, and desire to manage the students. Findings supported the benefits of pluralistic school experiences for future teachers and suggested that contextual conditions unique to a particular school may influence what preservice teachers learn and how they think about teaching. Examples of preservice teachers metaphors about teaching, semantic maps, final reflective statement, and dialogue journal entries; and a list of the six most frequently stated items on the semantic maps are appended. (Contains approximately 45 references.) (CK)

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Running head: GOOD DAYS/BAD DAYS: LEARNING TO TEACH

Good Days/Bad Days: Learning to Teach in Two Different Multicultural Schools

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Abstract

This dual site qualitative inquiry offers specific information about two highly regarded university field programs in two different schools that serve culturally diverse children. The study also attempts to make visible the complex influences of each school context on preservice teachers' acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge, concerns and dilemmas, and frames of reference about teaching children in a nonmainstream school setting.

Data from the inquiry support the benefits of pluralistic school experiences for future teachers and suggest that contextual conditions unique to a particular school may influence what preservice teachers learn and how they think about teaching.

"The schools in which ... [preservice teachers are placed] differ in many ways ...as do the students they teach" (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986, p. 507)

"Anyone who visits schools will be struck by the range of atmosphere or climate they provide" (Sparkes, 1991, p.5)

"When a ...[preservice] teacher enters a school for the first time, she enters more than a building; she enters a culture of teaching" (Bullough, 1987, p. 83)

"To understand the interaction under study, one must also understand the context within which it occurs. This is because ... the situation can affect perspectives and behavior" (Woods, 1992, p. 358)

Most teacher educators assume the importance of providing pluralistic field experiences for preservice teachers who may have limited views of cultural diversity. Having preservice teachers interact with children whose cultural, linguistic, and home backgrounds differ from their own has the potential to broaden their perspectives, challenge their beliefs, and help them "come face to face with the ... realities, complexities, difficulties, and rewards of their profession" (Metcalf, Hammer & Kahlich,1995, p. 3). Working in multicultural schools also provides opportunities for preservice teachers to confront, to examine, and, if necessary, to alter their views about teaching diverse or at-risk children (Bondy, Schmitz, & Johnson, 1993). Most importantly, working with children of varying backgrounds may influence preservice teachers from mainstream milieus to develop a willingness for teaching students from diverse cultures and to acquire a commitment and the necessary skills for promoting educational equity in United States' classrooms (Liston & Zeichner, 1990; Ross & Smith, 1992).

Despite current wide acceptance of the benefits of field placements for future teachers, "a substantial and growing body of research suggests that ...[participating in such programs] may actually lead to less desirable teacher ability" (Metcalf, Hammer, & Kahlich, 1995, p. 4).

The concerns of this research fall into four areas: 1) Studies that have examined preservice teachers' experiences in schools generally have relied on indirect measures such as pre-and- post semester surveys and questionnaires rather than "direct, prolonged, on-the-spot [field] observations" (Spindler & Spindler, 1992, p. 63). Few significant indepth studies have been completed. 2) Practices are based upon unexamined assumptions. Despite acknowledgement of wide diversifications in programs, research that looks at university/K-12 connections generally has excluded descriptions of program characteristics, ignored the specific contexts in which these initiatives take place, and disregarded their impact on preservice teachers' development (Carter, 1990; Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Feiman-Nemser & Buchman, 1987; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Liston & Zeichner, 1990; Zeichner, Tabachnick & Densmore, 1987). 3) Participation may have negative effects on preservice teachers' perceptions and practices. For example, because of school culture and norms, characteristics of students, patterns of student/teacher interactions, or how learning is defined, preservice teachers may become preoccupied with group management concerns, may come to consider students with different values, customs, and language as adversaries, and may exhibit less desirable attitudes and performances toward teaching (Evertson, Hawley & Zlotnick, 1985; Richards, Gipe & Moore, 1995); 4) Participation in field placements may influence preservice teachers to develop psychological role conflict and to experience unresolved dissonance. Several studies conclude that placing preservice teachers in classrooms that are incongruous from their own educational and cultural backgrounds negatively affects their self-concepts, motivation for teaching, and sense of self-efficacy (Waxman & Walberg, 1986).

This dual site qualitative inquiry responds to these criticisms by offering context specific information about two highly regarded university field programs in two different schools that serve culturally diverse children. The study also attempts to make visible the complex influences of each school context on preservice teachers' acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge[1], their concerns and dilemma, and their frames of reference[2] about teaching children in nonmainstream school settings. The inquiry extends previous research in teacher socialization by illuminating preservice teachers' experiences and viewpoints through a predominantly cultural anthropological approach that "builds meaningful generalizations from detailed understandings of specific contexts" (Jacob, 1992, p. 295), and strives to "understand [and interpret] a [social] situation in terms of the individuals involved" (Liston & Zeichner, 1990, p. 611).

Our Purposes for Conducting The Inquiry

As supervisors in charge of field-based literacy methods courses, we spend a considerable amount of time out in the field with our preservice teachers. Because we are close friends and colleagues, we often converse together and share our insiders' knowledge of the elementary schools in which we work. It became apparent to us through our conversations that the contextual conditions of the two schools differed considerably. Yet, we had no specific documentation to support these conclusions. We also had strong hunches that different contextual

[1] Pedagogical content knowledge is conceptualized as teachers' knowledge of a specific content, and includes beliefs about why and how to teach, and knowledge of the learner (Shulman, 1986; Stein, Baxter & Leinhardt, 1990).

[2] Teachers' frames of reference are defined as unique to the individual, born of experience, and indicative of a teacher's values, thoughts, "ideas and perspectives at a single point in time"(Mager, Alioto, Warchol & Carapellas,1995,p.9). Frames of reference are very practical, and include the knowledge, values, and skills that will shape each preservice teacher's future thinking, and what they will be inclined to do as classroom teachers (Mager, Alioto,Warchol & Carapellas, 1995).

variables associated with each school influenced our preservice teachers' professional thinking and development in both positive and negative ways, but again we lacked definitive information to substantiate our hunches.

Our purposes for conducting the inquiry were to illuminate the complex social situations and interactions within each school and to attempt to discover the preservice teachers' conceptualizations of their school experiences (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993). Once we grasped a better understanding of the contextual realities of the two schools and "the demands and expectations pressed upon ...[our preservice teachers] by [each] school" (Veeneman, 1984 in Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993, p. 448), we could modify course content, if necessary, and offer special activities to help our preservice teachers recognize the linkages between their teaching situations and their own perspectives and educational practices (Liston & Zeichner, 1990). Thus, through our research efforts, we hoped to provide maximum learning conditions for our preservice teachers that might shape in positive ways, their future thinking and actions as classroom teachers.

The Elementary School Contexts

Diamond Elementary School

The first university program meets in a K-8 urban school in New Orleans, Louisiana. Diamond Elementary School is located in a very old, three-story, non-air-conditioned, red brick building. Paint peels from the walls, light bulbs hang suspended from frayed cords, classroom ceilings leak during rain storms, and the hallways and stairwells are dark and dingy. In the spring and fall temperatures in individual classrooms may reach over 100 degrees. Apparently the school board does not consider Diamond when allocating money for city-wide school improvements.

There is a permissive atmosphere in this school and an optimism concerning students' abilities and motivations to be responsible, motivated, and self-directed. Students address teachers by their first names, and they are allowed to walk out of classrooms without asking permission in order to use the bathroom, or to go to the water fountain, or to speak with the principal concerning problems with peers or teachers. They also are encouraged to interact and verbalize with one another whenever they wish. Consequently, the noise level is high. Many students in grades two and above are overage for their grade placement and many of the older students were dropouts for a year or more prior to attending Diamond. "Unable to achieve in school, these ... [students] ... see academic success as unattainable and so they protect themselves by deciding school is unimportant" (Comer, 1988, p. 6). Unfortunately, a sense of inadequacy, low self-esteem, inner conflicts, chronic anger, and peer pressures contribute to some students exhibiting developmentally inappropriate, disruptive behavior, such as fighting, walking out of classrooms, running through the halls, talking out during lessons, verbally challenging their teachers, and occasionally deliberately trying to offend the university preservice teachers (e.g., "I hate white people!"). Since student individuality and freedom of expression are stressed, few students receive reprimands or consequences for inappropriate actions or comments.

Each semester a few of the older girls become pregnant, and a few of the older boys are expelled for illegal activities such as selling or using drugs or carrying concealed weapons. In one recent, isolated incident, an eighth grade boy superficially wounded himself in the knee when he reached into his bookbag and accidentally discharged a pistol that he had brought to school to use as a defense against a gang of bullies in his neighborhood.

Pedagogical autonomy is offered to the 13 teachers at Diamond Elementary School, and their instructional orientations range from a "teacher-as-information-giver" view to a constructivist, "teacher -as- facilitator" approach. Most of the 350 students' reading and language arts test scores are significantly below the norm.

Forest Park Elementary School

The second university program is located in a modern, beige brick, single-story, air-conditioned K-6 school in a small town on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Forest Park Elementary School is exceptionally clean, orderly, and quiet. An authoritarian, inflexible, custodial attitude permeates Forest Park. Teachers are definitely in charge, and student control and regimentation are valued and stressed. Students follow their teachers' directions without question. For the most part, they are expected to work silently and alone. Classes walk in silent lines through the halls when they are going to physical education or music lessons, and some teachers tell students to hold their fingers over their lips as a reminder that talking is forbidden. Students must address teachers by their formal names, and they are expected to answer teachers' questions with a nod of their head followed by a "Yes, m'am" or "No, m'am." Students are punished for breaking even the smallest rule by being sent to a special in-school suspension room, where they work silently under the direction of a full time teachers' assistant. Students call this type of punishment "being in the hot seat." Paralleling students' affective dimensions at Diamond, many students at Forest Park also experience feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, inner conflicts, chronic anger, and pressure from peers. Because of fear of punishment, they seldom manifest their feelings by "acting out." When they do exhibit inappropriate behavior, they are immediately isolated.

The instructional philosophy of all 20 teachers at Forest Park is "teacher-as-information-giver." Effective teaching is equated with keeping students quiet and on-task. Lessons are decontextualized and skills-based, and students work on only one assignment at a time (e.g., reading from 9:00 to 9:50 AM). Here, as in Diamond, the majority of the 450 students' reading and language arts standardized test scores are significantly below the norm.

Commonalities of Both University Programs

Four commonalties undergird both university programs: 1) Guided by a constructivist, inquiry-oriented view of learning, both university programs focus on integrated, literature-based instruction; 2) As teacher educators in charge of both programs, we hold holistic, student-centered orientations; 3) The university course activities of both programs are similar; and 4) We work to insure that we offer the preservice teachers in both programs ongoing, detailed supervision and caring, empathic support.

Research Methodology

Theoretical Perspective

Tenets of qualitative inquiry guided our research. Qualitative methods are especially appropriate when research is field-focused (Eisner, 1991) and when researchers wish to provide "rich descriptive data about the contexts, activities, and beliefs of participants in educational settings" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 17). Four literatures informed the study: 1) perspectives from symbolic interactionism that consider the social organizations of schools and help to explain why school organizational structures influence students' and teachers' actions (Alvermann, O'Brien & Dillon, 1996; Erickson, 1992; Measor & Woods, 1984; Woods, 1992); 2) research which suggests that norms, traditions, roles, and values are crucial contextual variables, and that beliefs, behavior, and learning are "socially constructed in the course of interaction with students, teachers, and

others" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1992, p. 818); 3) ideas from sociology, anthropology, and sociolinguistics that emphasize human development in terms of culture and context (Grant & Fine, 1992; Spindler & Spindler, 1992); and 4) traditions from hermeneutic interpretive analysis that provide "a window for viewing [preservice] teachers' renditions of their in-school experiences" and which can reveal and identify " the contextual social rules that underlie [preservice] teachers' actions" (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993, p. 449).

We designed the study "following guidelines of participant-observational field work [with the goal of gaining insights into] the meaning-perspectives of [the preservice teachers]" (Rovegno, 1992, p. 71). In addition, we were sensitive to the construct of triangulation since "the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point . . . [and] designing a study in which multiple cases, multiple informants or more than one data gathering are used can greatly strengthen the study's usefulness for other settings" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 146).

Study Participants

Study participants were 85 female and three male junior or senior preservice teachers, majoring in elementary or exceptional education (45 preservice teachers were at Diamond Elementary School, and 43 preservice teachers were at Forest Park Elementary School). Of these 88 preservice teachers, 85 were Caucasian, two were African-American, and one was Hispanic-American. All were from middle socioeconomic backgrounds.Their ages ranged from 21 to 42 years. The preservice teachers were enrolled in fall or spring semester, reading and language arts, field-based courses offered in one of two colleges of education located in adjacent southern states.

Data Sources and Data Analysis

Serving as participant researchers (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984), we collected data for two semesters in both school settings. Data sources were field notes of teaching observations and conversations as well as artifacts--"texts which themselves are implicated in the everyday construction of reality" (Atkinson, 1990, p. 178). The artifacts included preservice teachers' dialogue journals, metaphors and semantic maps depicting their teaching experiences, and final reflective statements (see Appendices A through D for examples of these artifacts). Additionally, we photographed ongoing activities of both programs in order to capture in an objective way the events particular to each school setting and the "daily life of the group [s] under study" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 86).

At the end of each semester we met together as a research team, collating all of the data sets for study participants, making notes, and transcribing the data when necessary (e.g., transcribing our understandings of the teaching/learning activities and the social interactions depicted in the photographs). We also made two separate listings of the items mentioned in the preservice teachers' semantic maps according to whether they worked at Diamond or at Forest Park Elementary School, and then we tallied and compared the frequency of the items on each list (see Appendix E for a listing of the six most frequently mentioned items on the preservice teachers' semantic maps).

In subsequent meetings, we conducted content analyses, comparing and cross-checking the aggregated data in order to identify and code similar themes and patterns (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We negotiated points of disagreement through roundtable discussions until we reached a consensus.

Methodological Limitations

Methodological limitations to the inquiry must be acknowledged. First, as is common to all research efforts, we brought our own backgrounds to the inquiry and our own particular ways of interpreting the data. "Qualitative researchers can never overlook the fact that they are gendered, multiculturally situated, and theoretically inclined to view phenomena in ways that influence what questions get asked and what methodology is used to answer those questions" (Denzin, 1994 in Alvermann, O'Brien & Dillon, 1996, p. 116). "There is always the question of [subjective] interpretation [in social research]" (Blachowitz & Wimett, 1994, p. 11). However, the credibility or "truth value" of our efforts was established through structural corroboration (i.e., "the use of multiple sources and types of data to support [our] ... interpretations") (Pitman & Maxwell, 1992, p. 748). Second, our interpretive approach relied on the subjective understandings and points of view of 88 preservice teachers. It is highly possible that other preservice teachers might hold different perceptions and understandings about their teaching experiences in the two schools. Third, the inquiry examined two public elementary schools where "teaching takes place in a complex social situation, with each ... school ... offering a distinct constellation of social conditions. Generalizable principles ... are simply not possible" (Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1993).

Major Themes Emerging from the Inquiry

Twelve major themes emerged from the inquiry which we accept as representing the preservice teachers' realities at a single point in their professional careers. The themes illuminate the distinct characteristics of the two elementary schools and suggest that certain contextual variables unique to each field placement influenced the preservice teachers' initial impressions about their teaching assignments, feelings of frustration or confidence, group management

concerns, regard for children's well-being and learning, acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge, and sense of success or failure.

Examination of the Themes

1. The two schools differ considerably with respect to classroom teachers' expectations for students' behavior, student/teacher interactions, and how learning and school achievement are defined. These expectations, norms, and traditions were conveyed through both formal and indirect means to the preservice teachers, and influenced their initial impressions about the schools in which they were placed (e.g., **Diamond Elementary School**: "Nothing could have prepared me for what I saw today. All these kids do is talk and the teacher just let's them do whatever they want." * "I am really worried. I heard about how the kids run this school and now I know it's true"; **Forest Park Elementary School**: "I made a cake to use as a visual with our story and when I served it to the kids the teacher ran right over because she doesn't allow them to do anything like eating cake or having fun in school."* " I feel like I'm in a strange country and I don't know the rules but I'm sure I'll break them." * "I know I'll break a rule and I feel like the rules keep changing and expanding." * "What are the rules today?").

2. Preservice teachers in both colleges of education entered the field placements sharing unrealistic expectations regarding their abilities to influence students' learning and holding idealized conceptions about teaching (e.g., **Diamond Elementary School**: "I will work to make sure that all of my students learn how to read and write"; **Forest Park Elementary School**: "I know I'll be able to help them become turned on to school and to learning").

3. All 88 preservice teachers experienced initial anxieties and feelings of vulnerability about teaching in a nonmainstream school setting (e.g., **Diamond**

Elementary School: "I have fears. I was awake all night worrying about going to that school."* "I had heard horror stories and they are true." ; "I have memorized the route to and from the school so that I won't get off the main roads."; **Forest Park Elementary School**: "Why were we placed in this school?" * "I am uptight and anxious. I can't even pronounce these children's names.").

4. Twelve preservice teachers in the fall semester and 10 preservice teachers in the spring semester at Diamond Elementary School developed negative frames of reference about teaching children in a culturally diverse school setting (e.g., "It was hard to relate to these students since I do not come from where they do. I'll apply for a position in my own community first."* "Why don't these children act like the children where I teach preschool? When I tell my preschool children to line up, they line up!" * "This place is shocking!"). Three preservice teachers in the fall semester and two preservice teachers in the spring semester at Diamond Elementary School developed positive frames of reference about teaching students in a culturally diverse school setting (e.g., "These students taught me a lot about inner city children who I knew nothing about."). In contrast, 15 preservice teachers in the fall semester and 22 preservice teachers in the spring semester at Forest Park Elementary School developed positive frames of reference about working with culturally diverse students (e.g., " I love these children and I just wish that I could help all of them.")

5. Similar to Grossman and Richert's (1986) conclusions regarding the connection between field experiences and preservice teachers' knowledge development, participation in either school placement appeared to facilitate the preservice teachers' acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge in positive ways. However, the preservice teachers at Diamond Elementary School focused

more on their own learning while the preservice teachers at Forest Park Elementary School focused more on what individual children were learning (e.g., **Diamond Elementary School**: "I would say my greatest success was in learning how to teach reading and language arts."* "I have begun to solidify my views about teaching reading." ; **Forest Park Elementary School**: "I initially chose books above their level."*"He is doing much better. He wrote two whole sentences in his journal today.").

6. Seven preservice teachers in the fall semester and 12 preservice teachers in the spring semester at Diamond Elementary School continued to experience anxieties and frustrations throughout the semester. They manifested their anxieties by distancing themselves from their students and by complaining (e.g., "There are only three more weeks in this semester and I am out of here. Thank God!" • "Regretfully, I must tell you that I hated this place."•"I have been in this school a month now and I am losing the war."•"The student that I enjoy working with the most is the only Caucasian student in my group. I can communicate with him."•"I have finally wised up! I just send him out of the group. When I send him away he just says, 'So!'").

7. Contrary to the findings of other studies which suggest that for the most part, field experiences promote preservice teachers' authoritarian perspectives, (e.g., see Zeichner, 1980), all 43 of the preservice teachers at Forest Park Elementary School developed student-centered orientations (e.g., "Those poor kids--they can't even talk. I'll never be a teacher who is so strict that kids can't enjoy school.").

8. Three preservice teachers in the fall semester and two preservice teachers in the spring semester at Diamond Elementary School experienced ongoing feelings of extreme failure (e.g., "I feel like I have failed my profession."* "I am so sorry and regretful that I never really did a good job").

9. Similar to conclusions reported by Hoy and Woolfolk (1990) in their study of the effects of organizational socialization on student teachers' preoccupations with student management, the majority of preservice teachers at Diamond Elementary School remained preoccupied throughout the semester with group management concerns. (e.g., "Next week I'm not going to let them say one word out of turn!"• "I am going to try a token system so that I can reward students for good behavior, if there is any good behavior.").

10. The preservice teachers at Diamond Elementary School mainly were concerned about classroom teachers' permissive attitudes and "unruly," unmotivated students (e.g., "All of the problems were made worse by the classroom teacher's attitude about not letting me give kids time-out."* "These students are constantly disruptive, hostile, boisterous, and disinterested. They also waste time."). The preservice teachers at Forest Park Elementary School mainly were concerned about offering effective literacy lessons, enhancing individual student's social, emotional, and academic well-being, and circumnavigating classroom teachers' controlling orientations (e.g., "After pondering and worrying about the situation for an entire week, I decided to continue to take her dictation. She still is insecure about writing."* "I am going to get a book about knights and dragons since he has no knowledge of these and he confuses the word 'knight' with 'night'." * "I am concerned because of his home life." * "I felt like our drama practice was being monitored by the teacher. I am determined to practice with my kids in privacy").

11. Over the course of the semester, the majority of preservice teachers in both schools came to value their teaching experiences and developed confidence in their teaching abilities. (e.g.,**Diamond Elementary School**: "I now know more than any outsider would ever believe.I can teach anywhere."* "I'm going to be a great teacher!"; **Forest Park Elementary School**: "Every future teacher needs this experience.I feel like I'm more than ready for student teaching.").

12. There are strengths and shortcomings associated with both field contexts (e.g.,**Diamond Elementary School**: "One of the problems in this school is their overly student-centered philosophy."; **Forest Park Elementary School**: "One of the problems in this school is the philosophy of strict-no talking.").

Our Conclusions

As thoughtful, qualitative researchers, we know that caution must temper our conclusions. Contextual considerations are "subtle and difficult to [capture and] untangle" (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990 p. 296). Context is "experienced, understood, and interpreted [individually]" (Clarke, Hall, Jefferson, & Roberts, 1981, pp. 52-53) and therefore, is one of the most complex, and elusive qualities to understand and describe (Gibson, 1986). Nonetheless, we conclude that the inquiry provides several important considerations. First, working with minority students in either school setting appeared to enhance considerably the preservice teachers' professional thinking and development (e.g., "I sure learned about myself as a professional. I did a lot of growing up this semester, and I realize I still have a long way to go.")

Second, despite some of the preservice teachers' concerns, anxieties, and ongoing feelings of failure, the majority of preservice teachers in either field placement came to recognize the value of their school experiences, and they developed confidence in their abilities to teach students from diverse backgrounds

(e.g., "This teaching experience is my first of actually working with children on a continuous basis. In the first few weeks I was terrified. I attended private schools and my first glimpse of an urban school shocked me. Only two of my students in second grade can read. But, a lot of people ask me how I like teaching in 'that part of town' and you know what? -- I can't shut up about MY second graders.").

The inquiry also suggests that contextual conditions unique to a particular school may play a part in influencing what preservice teachers learn and how they think about teaching. For example, the preservice teachers at Diamond Elementary School (the permissive, student-centered school) developed authoritarian attitudes toward their students (e.g.," I will continue to go over the rules and send kids away from the group."). In contrast, the preservice teachers at Forest Park Elementary School (the authoritarian school) shifted toward student-centered orientations (e.g., "Is there anything these kids are allowed to do? They can't even paint or sing."). Another difference is that the foremost concerns of the preservice teachers at Diamond Elementary School centered around classroom teachers' permissive attitudes and "unruly" students (e.g., "She never reprimands them!!" * " I am thrilled when William is absent. He is the worst to manage."), while the concerns of the preservice teachers at Forest Park Elementary School focused more on their effectiveness as literacy teachers, individual student's learning and well- being, and classroom teachers' authoritarian attitudes (e.g., "She told me that she has no father and her mother isn't home very much. Isn't that terrible? -- the poor child." * " Now they won't even let us take our kids out in the hallway for a minute."). Another intriguing finding is that while the preservice teachers in both colleges of education recognized how much they had learned about teaching reading and language arts,

the preservice teachers at Diamond Elementary School focused more on their own learning (e.g., "I never knew about literature-based instruction."), while the preservice teachers at Forest Park Elementary School focused more on individual students' literacy progress (e.g., " He wrote back to me in his journal for the first time. I'm thrilled.").

We conclude that these phenomena occurred because of the different realities associated with each school. It appears that concerns with managing groups of students influenced the preservice teachers at Diamond Elementary School to become more controlling in their orientations toward students as a means of accomplishing their teaching goals and successfully completing course requirements. Preoccupation with maintaining group order also prohibited these preservice teachers from interacting with individual students, and getting to know individual student's strengths and specific academic and emotional needs. Understandably, these preservice teachers concentrated more on their own learning and development as a way to assuage their struggles and affirm their worth as beginning professionals. In contrast, the preservice teachers at Forest Park Elementary School had very few problems with student behavior. Therefore, they had ample opportunities to get to know students on a personal level and considerable time to reflect about individual student's academic and emotional needs. In addition, it is quite clear that these preservice teachers resented and consciously resisted Forest Park's custodial atmosphere. We surmise that they adopted student-centered perspectives as a way to counteract the classroom teachers' strict attitudes.

Conducting the inquiry has provided information that supports our convictions about the benefits of diverse school experiences for future teachers. At the same time, engaging in the research has pushed us to reevaluate our field programs. We now have substantial evidence that the two schools differ and we

are aware of some of the contextual strengths and shortcomings of each school. Therefore, we understand the importance of spending time selecting field sites with characteristics that are congruent with the goals and orientations of our preservice teacher preparation curriculums (Zeichner & Liston, 1987). In addition, we know that school experiences can exert both positive and negative consequences on preservice teachers' professional thinking and development. Consequently, we recognize that it is imperative for us to monitor our preservice teachers' perceptions, concerns, and professional growth throughout their time in the field so that we can offer appropriate interventions whenever necessary. Finally, we conclude that we need to refashion our programs. We need to provide opportunites for our preservice teachers to get to know their students as individuals with different interests, perspectives, and strengths. We need to include activities such as case writing and action research projects that can help our preservice teachers learn how to look purposefully and critically at their teaching and how to brain-storm and problem-solve effective ways for reaching their students (Powell, Zehm & Garcia, 1996). We need to provide seminar discussions and readings about multicultural issues that can help our preservice teachers analyze the contextual conditions of a school and come to understand how these conditions have the capacity to shape their teaching views, their pedagogical actions, and ultimately, their teaching successes (Sparkes, 1991). These program changes could very well insure that all of our preservice teachers develop positive attitudes toward their experiences in the field, as well as the knowledge and commitment necessary for effectively teaching culturally diverse children.

Authors' Note: Janet Richards is an associate professor in the Division of Education and Psychology where she supervises field-based literacy methods courses. Ramona Moore recently received a Ph. D. from the University of New Orleans. Joan Gipe holds the rank of Research Professor. The names of the schools and the students' names in this article are pseudonyms. The authors wish to thank the preservice teachers who graciously gave permission for their oral and written comments to be included in the manuscript.

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Appendix A

Examples of Preservice Teachers' Metaphors about Teaching

Diamond Elementary School

* "Teaching here is like being in a three-ring circus. There is chaos everywhere. In each ring there is a new and somewhat bizarre escapade, only I'm not laughing."

* "My experiences here have been like holding a rose. Like a rose , it's appearance seems wonderful, but the minute you hold that rose wrong the thorns will cut your hand. On some days my children are the sweet beautiful petals but on other days they are the dreadful thorns that cut into my side."

* "Teaching at this school is like being thrown to the wolves. Sometimes I feel as though I was just thrown into teaching and that I have no idea of what I am doing. I am unsure if my students are learning anything."

* "Teaching at this school is like walking through a maze. Before you go into the maze you feel somewhat confident but once you're in the maze you feel disoriented and confused."

Forest Park Elementary School

* "Teaching here this semester is like being a foreigner in a strange land where you don't know the rules but you are sure just as soon as you do something wrong, someone will correct you."

* "Teaching here is like digging for buried treasure. I know something is there but it's been covered for so long you can't get to it."

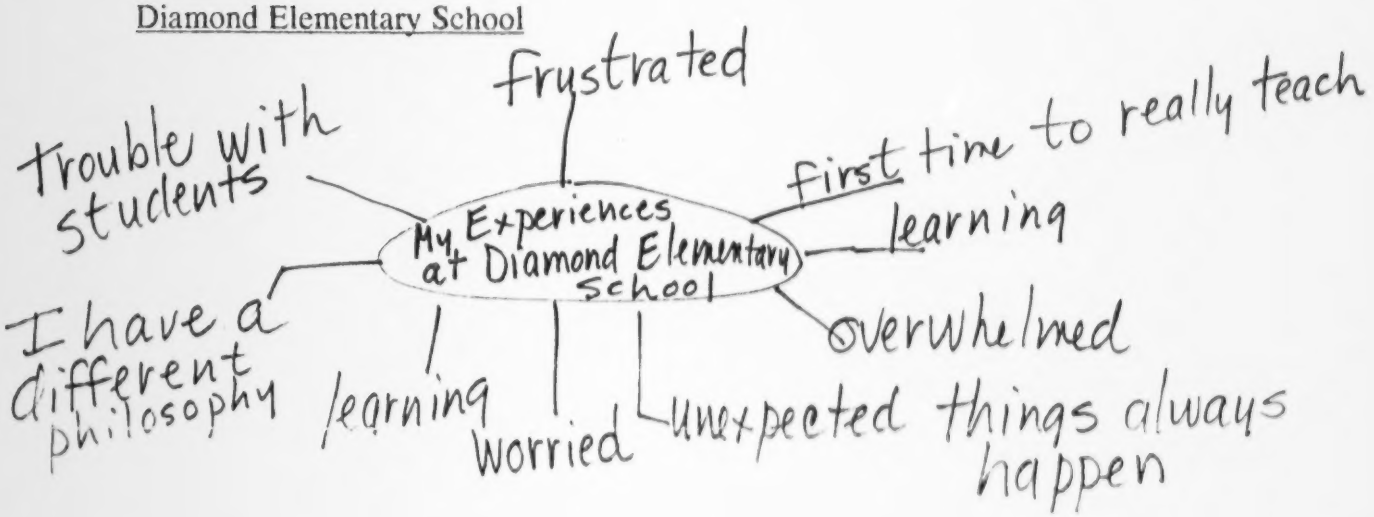
* "Teaching here is like wanting to fly and realizing your wings have been clipped."

* "Teaching here is like being afraid to take a chance because the headmaster might crack his whip."

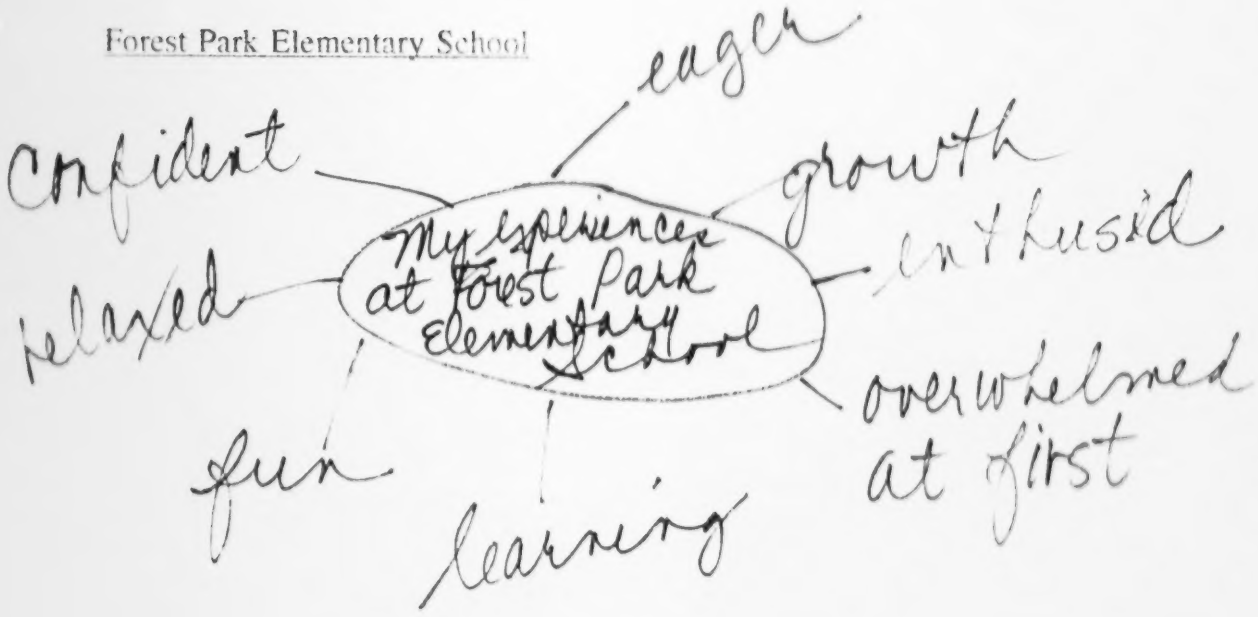
Appendix B

Examples of Preservice Teachers' Semantic Maps Depicting Their Teaching Experiences

Diamond Elementary School



Forest Park Elementary School



Appendix C

Example of a Preservice Teacher's Final Reflective Statement

Diamond Elementary School

Wow! What a semester. I hardly know where to begin as I look back and reflect on the work I did. I've had good days and bad days. At the beginning of the semester, I felt overwhelmed. I felt as if I had been thrown into a teaching position for which I was not ready. I had no idea how to teach, or how to help students learn about reading and language arts. I was somewhat familiar with the phonics approach--that's it! I remember feeling at a loss, wishing that I knew some strategies or methods to help the students learn. I do not know when I thought I would learn these strategies unless it was a year-long class (which isn't a bad idea!).

During the semester there were times when my work with the kids was extremely stressful and at other times it was notably joyous. The children were not at all what I expected. They all contributed to the lessons at various times. But, they also had their moments when they disturbed others and refused to participate. I tried to have good communication with my kids. I believe that this enabled me to get to know them better.

One of the struggles I had to deal with was a student named Ben. I just could not get his attention. I do not know if I was doing something wrong or if he was the one with the problems. But, from working with him I learned a few strategies that I can use in similar situations in the future.

I sure learned a lot about myself as a professional. I did a lot of growing up this semester and I realize I still have a long way to go.. I've learned about group management techniques---some worked well and some didn't. I am glad that I had an opportunity to explore and experiment with these different techniques and find out which ones work for me. I've learned that I have to be consistent and fair to all of my students and that I must follow through with set consequences. I also need to be over prepared when I walk into a classroom. Another area I think I've improved in is that I learned how to relax a little bit with students.

You probably want to know about our failures.Well, it sure was a failure with Ben. I was never able to help him. In addition, many of the reading strategies you taught us were above these students' heads--that includes prediction logs, literature logs, cloze passages, and basic story features and their connections. A big surprise to me was the mural. Despite everything that I had heard from other former preservice teachers, I was sure that it would be a disaster. But, I was wrong. The kids loved it, cooperated, and were angels. I should have done more murals.

I certainly will take with me the idea that all children have a right to the best

possible education they can get, despite their family income. There is also something that I will not take with me and that's the "free to be me" approach in this school.

Finally, I can honestly say that I am thankful for this experience. I do not picture myself ever teaching in this school. There were days when I was really stressed out. But I did learn a lot about myself as a professional, my teaching philosophy, the type of group management system I like, and ideas for having a student-centered classroom

This class was very overwhelming for me at the beginning. I didn't know what was going on and I thought that I'd never be able to do it all. As time went on, and after asking tons of questions, I started to understand. I think what helped me the most was the demonstration lessons you presented. I never realized how much there was to teaching--like before you even read the story. All in all, I'm thankful for the experience.

Appendix D

Examples of Preservice Teachers' Dialogue Journal Entries

Diamond Elementary School

Dr. R.---I am stressed out. These kids don't listen and they don't like my lessons. I think they don't like me either. What suggestions do you have to help me get these students to listen? When I get ready to go into the classroom I can hear them all talking and making noise. Even the teacher can't seem to do anything with them. Why do we teach here?

Forest Park Elementary School

This school is very strict on kids. How will they learn to give their opinions if they can't talk and share ideas? Also, drama practice is really getting me upset. The teacher monitors our drama practice and so I feel that we get nothing accomplished because we're uptight. These rules are killing me. How can we follow the rules when they keep on adding new ones?

Appendix E

A Listing of the Six Most Frequently Stated Items
on the Preservice Teachers' Semantic Maps about Their Teaching Experiences

Diamond Elementary School	Forest Park Elementary
1. overwhelmed	1. learning
2. frustrated	2. fun
3. excited	3. relaxed
4. learning	4. confident
5. scared	5. anxious/challenged/enjoyable/ overwhelmed
6. problems with group management	6. valuable/enthused